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2017-05-25

## NWC Professor Looks Back on a Career of Relationships, Legacies

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Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California

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*U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Michael Ehrlich*

## NWC Professor Looks Back on a Career of Relationships, Legacies

*By MC2 Michael Ehrlich*

Naval War College (NWC) Monterey Professor retired Navy Cmdr. Michael McMaster speaks with students from one of his final classes on campus, May 23. McMaster will soon retire from the NWC program following a combined 39 years of government and military service.

“I’m teaching operations planning, but I’m not teaching that I did operations planning. I’m teaching that you all have to understand to learn how to build a network and a team, you have to lead people,” said McMaster.

“I tell the lieutenants that this is where they begin to build their networks, and I wish I had done it more then. Before you had one ship with one division. Now, you are going to be a department head with several other heads, and you’re going to want to talk to other department heads of other ships and see if they had similar issues or if they can help you with something.”

McMaster shared the story of seeing fellow shipmates from the past, some who had ascended to senior rank in the service, at a recent Surface Navy Association conference, and noted how invaluable it was to maintain those relationships throughout the years.

“These are people you going to know for the rest of your lives. What influence did you have on their lives, and what did they have on yours?” he asked.

McMaster served eight billets, from Italy to Hawaii, to his final tour at NPS as the Deputy Dean of Students and Deputy Director of Programs. McMaster’s final active-duty accomplishment was developing a partnership between

NWC and NPS, which prompted his unplanned transition to professor.

“I was the action officer to set up the partnership between the NWC and NPS as my last project ... Set up the offices, get the catalog and structure right. And then I started teaching a month before I retired because they needed somebody.”

McMaster had taught at the California Maritime Academy for two years, but says he has always enjoyed the unique challenges of teaching at NPS.

“I enjoy teaching what I know is relevant to their military careers in a general nature. If they stay in and they become staff officers, my curriculum is about planning on a staff,” he noted. “You will get a student who will email you back saying the course was a huge impact on them and they’ve used it and are glad to have exposure to it. That is something I find rewarding.”

In January of 2016, McMaster was honored with the Surface Navy Association’s Special Recognition Award for his support of the Surface Warfare Officer (SWO) community and his mentorship of junior officers at NPS.

“I like the fact that you can influence and motivate people by passing on knowledge you gained,” said McMaster. “I think over the course of a career or two, I look back and think, ‘Did I accomplish things individually?’ Sure a few, but I think the strength of my accomplishments were the people I led. We made it through because of the officers and the crew, not because of the XO. I drove the train but they were the ones doing the work. I think the things I appreciate the most over my careers are the people that I worked with, people that I still see over the years.”

5/25/17

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